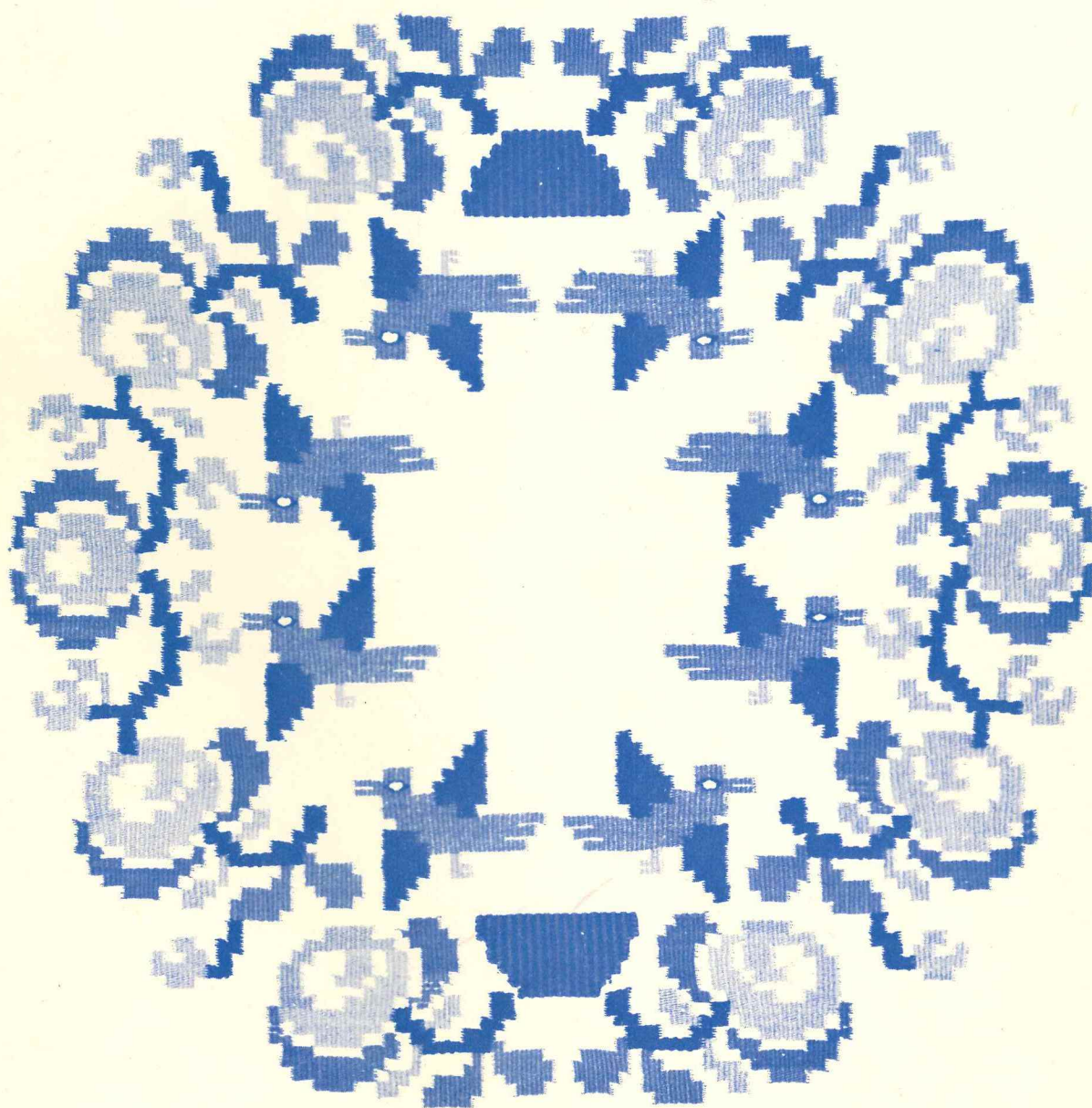


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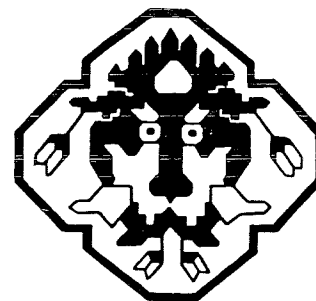


Volume 1—Number 4

DECEMBER 1965

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Cover—Detail of Guadalajara rug, Mexico (Fig. 6 in
"Folk Textiles of Latin America" by Pál Kelemen)

Photographs in the Kelemen article for Figures 2 and 6
are by Allen C. Marceron and for Figures 3-5, 10, 14 and
23 by Col. Osmund L. Varela.
Photographs in the Berliner article for Figures 2-10, 14,

18 and 19 are by Col. Osmund L. Varela, and photographs
for Figures 11-13 by Allen C. Marceron. The drawing for
Figure 17 is by Milton F. Sonday (as is also the sym-
bolic head on the Contents page and back of the cover).

REMARKS ON SOME TAPESTRIES FROM EGYPT

RUDOLF BERLINER

During 1963 and 1964 there were some good opportunities for gauging the state of research on tapestries from Egypt. It is lamentable and leads to a waste of effort that obsolete approaches to the problem are still defended.¹ Herewith are presented, within the space available, some comments on the progress of research relevant to our attempt to understand the tapestries in the context of Egyptian civilization from the beginning of our era down to A.D. 1200 or even into the 15th century.²

One must be aware of the complicated ethnic, religious and cultural conditions which this civilization had to surmount, a severe test for any historical endeavor. At first three, then four distinct groups lived together: the Egyptian, the Greek, the Jewish and the Arab. The civilization was a melting pot, basic differences between the separate entities necessarily diminishing as they lived together with increasing inter-relationship and interdependency. This integration affected all classes, from the lowest to the highest, intellectually, economically or socially. Actual life is full of paradoxical bridges between theoretically separate social entities . . . fashion, language, music, philosophy, poetry and art forms. "The laws and rules say much in theory, but how are we to ascertain whether they were enforced . . . ?"³ If they were, how could so much of paganism have survived, as I have formerly cited from Gerasa, (Berliner, 1964, p. 35). Draconic law tends to become obsolete quickly. "The cultural configurations for which an art style [I would prefer to omit "an" and "style"] is often the only proof of existence,"⁴ appear very different from those deduced from social and legal formalities or from theological or political quarrels. These latter are not the roots nourishing artistic creativity or fashion in the evolution of a civilization such as that of Egypt from the last centuries of the pre-Christian era. We can only learn from the arts and crafts themselves where in the evolution they belong, as too little is known of social and economic conditions, or even religious life, to classify them accordingly. Nothing is more revealing in this connection than our lack of information as to whether such an important monastery as Baouit adhered to the orthodox or the Monophysitic religion when the Arabs came. It is understandable that for theologians and modern Copts, religious life appears in the old times to have been centered around Christian doctrinal developments and to have been dominated by monastic fanatics. The ordinary person, however, may have been no more deeply committed to any specific faith than is usual at any time. Fanaticism demands a special kind of man. One should not

undervalue the need of broad support both to make creeds effective and to keep them alive. Human nature was essentially the same then as today.

That the Jewish educated classes had readily and effectively assimilated Greek culture need hardly be mentioned. It must have been in the Egyptian atmosphere that the average man of any group led his daily life not caring too much for differences in culture and creeds, but playing it safe in conflicts between pure doctrine and superstition (which to our day no religion has totally won). A most telling example has just been brought to general attention by Professor Mordecai Margalioth's successful recovery of a 2nd century Jewish manuscript of a book of magic charms, "chiefly in Hebrew . . . in many places it calls upon Greek gods to strengthen the effectiveness of charms taken from Egyptian sorcery, with additions from Hebrew and Greek folklore." (Nelson, pp. 21 ff.) "The Egyptians . . . took readily to Greek civilization, and the hellenization of the country proceeded rapidly." (Nilsson, p. 36) C. H. Roberts mentions two very characteristic examples: " . . . on the site of the small Egyptian village . . . dominated by the temple of the crocodile-god Sobk, were found fragments of the Hector of Astydamos and Plato's Apology . . ." The poems of the 6th century poet Dioscorus to Aphrodite are poor, but they prove the "appeal which the world of Hellenic culture still retained, even for a man of Egyptian race." (Roberts, 1953, pp. 265 and 343)⁵ Paul Perdrizet, after mentioning how effective had been the Greek influence not only in Alexandria but in the country at large (Chōra) after five centuries, adds the pertinent remark that "the Egyptian population later accepted with the same docility the teaching of Christianity and Islam." (Perdrizet, p. 100) Klaus Wessel tends to overemphasize racial differences: "We must strictly distinguish between the art of the 'Greeks' in Egypt and that of the Copts." (Wessel, *Koptische Kunst*, Recklinghausen, 1963, p. 38.171) For him the term "Greek" (in qualifying quotation marks) covers what, since the Ptolemies, consisted of a mixture of Greek⁶ and other non-Egyptian races. (Wessel, *ibid.*, pp. 57.136 ff.) Conveniently forgetting that in Alexandria Greeks and Egyptians must with the passage of time have intermixed to produce a strong non-Greek strain, he conceives of Alexandrian art⁷ up to the time of the Arab conquest as an entity of Hellenistic character. ("Praegung," Wessel, *ibid.*, p. 135) All this leads to an oversimplification of the problem of the survival or revival of classical tendencies by attributing such works to his "Greeks," although he is far from ignoring rela-

tionships of art in Egypt to Byzantine art *when analyzing a work of art* (e.g., Wessel, *ibid.*, p. 159.178). Wessel must have been aware of the lack of any thorough investigations of the impact of traditional Egyptian and Hellenistic art upon each other, or of their independent evolutions in our era. He must have been aware that Egyptian art had been basically as naturalistic as Greek art⁸ and that the sensitive expressiveness of its line had an affinity to the Greek. No one seems to have inquired how Egyptian tapestry weavers came to rely upon scant line drawing without shading and how they came to draw so expressively thus.⁹ Lacking evidence to confirm or contradict, the question can be answered only by stating the possibility that this resulted from a coalescence of the Hellenistic and the indigenous Egyptian entities. Wessel's approach is invalidated by his emphasis on the effect of antagonism between Egyptians and Greeks upon the arts and crafts, of the cultural differences between the Greeks in Alexandria and those inland, and by his treatment of the Egyptians as a culturally and socially low homogenous mass, maintaining their identity as Egyptians. He called them Copts even before the rule of Byzantium (A.D. 395) if they were descendants of the old Egyptians or the issue of intermarriage with them (Wessel, *ibid.*, p. 67 and p. 59). Unfortunately, he, as well as Pierre du Bourguet, continues to use this Arab term for the Egyptians who did not convert to Islam. To make the term consonant with its present meaning, they have to rely on qualifying quotation marks, leaving the reader unsure of the intended meaning and whether these qualifications are considered when the authors make general statements.

While working on *Koptische Kunst*, Wessel published a catalogue in 1962 of the Coptic collection of the Museum of Icons in Recklinghausen (Germany). The publication is entitled "Kunst der Kopten Sammlung des Ikonen-museums Recklinghausen." In the introduction, he stated his basic views more clearly than in the book. In accordance with its title, the introduction deals only with the art of late antiquity in Egypt, though in some of the catalogue notes works of much later dates are discussed. "It cannot be contested that as a definable unity, a 'Coptic art' [the qualification and the present tense are his] does not exist. Any endeavor to find specific characteristics of the style [the singular is his] or the subject matter of Coptic art is bound to fail because it does not reckon with the ethnic composition of the inhabitants of the endlessly stretching area of Egyptian civilization along the Nile." (It was about 950 kilometers on the preceding page—the pages are not numbered.) This is a correct reminder that both the Egyptian civilization and economy were conditioned by the geography of the country. They could not have been dominated by a few urban centers dictating a synchronized development everywhere. Furthermore, Egypt lay on the crossroads of the most important trade routes of the time and soon became a country crossed by many pilgrims. There is no

method known of correlating easily and accurately the activities in the decorative arts with a population of such different racial origins and open to such various cultural influences. Very few of the actual textiles can be interpreted from written sources about weavers because most sources refer to the periods before 500 and after 1000 and are not relevant to the centuries between. Even scarcer is information about tapestry weaving, the present topic of our concern.¹⁰ It is impossible at present to command a comprehensive view of tapestry development in Egypt simply because much too little of the available material is known or, if known, it has not been studied or precisely dated. Any attempt to sketch the development must be hypothetical. The hooks simply are not there upon which to hang a tale securely. But there are occasions when it must be tried. Wessel has devoted one-fifth of his book to the discussion of textile art, and it is unjust to his endeavor to point out only its weaknesses. Concerning the tapestries, he stated a pessimism akin to mine: "... up to now not only have we not succeeded in convincingly ordering the bulk of the preserved pieces chronologically, but in fact there is even as yet no secure, uncontroversial framework ["Geruest"] available for dating." (Wessel, *Koptische kunst*, Recklinghausen, *op. cit.*, p. 202) But true to one of his basic approaches to the problem of Egyptian art, he did not fear daring generalizations: "... not the Christian Copts, but the Greeks whose roots continued to be in paganism ["die weiterhin im Heidentum verwurzelten Griechen"] produced most of the 'Coptic' textiles," (*ibid.*, p. 225) especially those in the Byzantine style. The Copts may occasionally have had a part in the production as handymen, but they repudiated the Greek form (*ibid.*, p. 235). Their own production was "Volkskunst," a term Wessel uses ambiguously.¹¹ Sometimes its meaning is a qualifying one like "not a product for the highest demands" (*ibid.*, p. 232, "die höchsten Ansprüche"). Unfortunately he was impressed by Hilde Zaloscer's unexplained designation (Zaloscer, p. 99) of Coptic art as the "true expression of the Egyptian people," which may correspond to his "eigene Volkskunst," the characteristic art of the Coptic people. It is this line of thinking which led to the differentiation between Coptic art and the art of the Copts, assuming the former to be a popular art differentiated from the latter, the art of the ruling class which, though executed by Copts, is no part of Coptic art. It is a strange way of thinking, initiated by Josef Strzygowski, leading to a terminology about as precise as though one classified English Palladian Renaissance not as "English" art but as "art of the English." (Strzygowski might also have approved reducing the problem of survival and revival of classicism to a racial one.) Such oversimplification is not supported by evidence but serves to acknowledge the fact that traces of the Greek-Hellenistic and Roman entities survived.

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In his introduction to the catalogue of the Zurich exhibition Wessel reiterates his distrust of exact



Fig. 1 Museum für Kunsthandwerk Frankfurt am Main, Inv. Nr. 3610

dating for the tapestries: "Dating is almost never based on exact knowledge and expresses merely a possibility." (Wessel, 1963-64, p. XVIII) Nonetheless he undertook, in the Supplement to the catalogue, to date within two centuries the majority of the pieces. For the rest he used indefinite classifications such as "late antique" or "Islamic period" or even "early" or "late medieval." Here we can see that research has not progressed, since even fifty years ago Isabelle Erréra (Erréra, 1916), who understood textiles as well as anyone does now, avoided the term Coptic as lacking precision and preferred indicating dominant influences, for instance, "égypto-romano-byzantin (6th century?)" which means made in Egypt under the double influence of Rome and Byzantium (Erréra, *ibid.*, p. iv), or "égypto-byzantino-arabo," with dates ranging from the 7th to the 11th century.

It is a characteristic difference between Wessel and du Bourguet¹² that the latter is completely confident of his opinions and raises no question which he does not answer himself. In the Paris catalogue he does not hesitate to date the tapestries precisely within limits which rarely span more than

one century and never two.¹³ Such precise dating is not convincing without a scrupulous study and good reasons, among which cannot be reckoned mere references to equally controversial pieces.

I have previously noted (Berliner, 1964, p. 49, note 59) the hesitation of Professor Weitzmann to check on the dating of the Frankfurt tapestry (Fig. 1) the representation of which he was discussing. It is one in which the drawing is as remarkable as the weave. It is of high quality and appears to be an original and not a copy of another weaving. One can assume that it was worked immediately from a drawing. It would seem that for someone with an intimate knowledge of pictorial design of the period it would not be difficult to determine both the century of a drawing of such style on papyrus and whether the style could be of probable Egyptian origin. Weitzmann's reluctance to commit himself, one so familiar with the pictorial arts of the Eastern Empire, can be interpreted as a tacit acknowledgement that a textile design cannot be classified and dated merely by comparison with works less conditioned by technical and economic considerations than fabrics. Their producers were also less



Figs. 2 and 3 Details of Textile Museum 71.72 (8 cm.)

numerous and less heterogenous than the weaving people. Much as a definite Weitzmann opinion might have proved helpful, his reluctance is also valuable because it tacitly acknowledges another of my points, that without reference to previous painstaking investigation of individual pieces, the statement of an opinion is of little avail. For example, one tries in vain to guess why John Beckwith dated the Frankfurt tapestry about A.D. 600 (Beckwith, p. 17), or why du Bourguet dated it 6th century in the Paris Catalogue (*op. cit.*, no. 266). Weitzmann was not familiar with the Textile Museum roundels (Figs. 2-7) from the fragments of a garment (T.M. 71.72) bought in 1940 which bear similarity to the Frankfurt tapestry. We see in Figs. 2 and 3 obviously further scenes of the Orestes and Iphigenia story. Each depicts the statue of Artemis, flanked by two young men. One of these carries a stick, poised and self-assured in both roundels, while the other is depicted as resigned and despondent in one roundel and as reacting to his companion in a lively manner in the other. This corresponds to the first scene in Euripides' play, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, with Orestes' despair in the face of the difficulty of robbing the statue and with Pylades' cool mastery of the situation. The dramatic emphasis is reminiscent of the Frankfurt tapestry, the weaver of which endeavored to express the different moods and reactions to the situation of the four human beings of whom none is yet aware that the statue of the goddess has become animated and is about to inter-

vene. The men in the other four roundels (Figs. 4 to 7) fit equally well into the context of Euripides' Iphigenia story. They act like men suddenly called to catch the strangers. Each expresses a different reaction to the situation, each carrying a shield, one carrying a stone while one appears to have already thrown his (Fig. 7). According to Euripides, Orestes and Pylades were subdued by stones (*Iphigenia in Tauris*, v. 310 ff). Evidently one man is summoning others to follow him (Fig. 6), which another (Fig. 5) seems to be doing.¹⁴ The transience, clarity and individuality of the movements of the men are surprising. In this respect the weaving may be of a still higher quality than the Frankfurt piece. Certainly these tapestries are also original weavings. The Frankfurt roundel has been separated from its companion pieces, and we cannot know how they looked. Stylistically it is markedly different from the Textile Museum's roundels, the figures of which are not shown in perspective as from above¹⁵ and which are drawn with more energetic and freer strokes. Their volume is much more apparent. I dare not classify the two weavers closely together, though they belong in the same evolutionary stream. It is of interest that Beckwith dated vaguely in the 5th-7th century a tapestry of the Victoria and Albert Museum (Beckwith, p. 11) which appears related to the Textile Museum roundels, though weaker. The geometric vine leaves on the band in Fig. 3 point to a later date. The Iphigenia tapestries may throw some new light on the



Figs. 4 and 5 Details of Textile Museum 71.72

problem of pattern books for textiles and their availability in those times. One would not assume that a weaver would work directly from the illustrations of a manuscript. Quite apart from the expense of such a volume, only designs adapted to his exigencies could be a real help to a weaver. We must conclude that either the same pattern book came to the hands of different weavers, or that they acquired books containing some similar designs. To my knowledge, nothing would support a supposition that a Byzantine manuscript illustrator of an Euripides play would have independently depicted what was related but not shown on the stage. It is generally accepted (Marshall, p. 244) that the classical tragedies were no longer acted. But it is possible that their subject matter was represented in versions¹⁶ adapted to the "show" character of the Byzantine theater (see Berliner, 1964, p. 35), an assumption natural for a generation accustomed to musical and movie adaptations of great literature, or jazz renderings of Johann Sebastian Bach's music. No matter how the stone throwers came to be included in the illustrations of the play, they must have been taken over from actual representations.

So many examples are known similar to the Textile Museum's tapestries that they can be assumed to be Egyptian, though of exceptional quality. The Frankfurt tapestry could have been imported to Egypt. As no one has refuted the Seyrig-Roberts explanation of the signature "Herakleias" on the Museum hanging, (cf. Berliner, 1962, p. 10), a general reluctance to accept it appears irrational.¹⁷

Must the Alexandrian Nonnos have been following some literary convention when he named (about A.D. 450-475) as paragons of tapestries those woven by Athenian women, not Alexandrian (*Dionysiaka*, 39 v. 188 f)? The assumption of an Egyptian origin of the tapestries has become so prevalent that I recall no recent mention of the Nonnos quotation or of a request made from Alexandria about A.D. 402 by Symmachus¹⁸ to buy for him some clothing which an Athenian merchant would bring to Carthage (which was itself the seat of a state textile mill).

Wessel's pessimism concerning the dating of the tapestries is even greater than mine, because he believes (Wessel, *Koptische Kunst*, 1963, p. 202) that no progress can be made unless technical processes can be put into chronological order. As techniques and materials cannot speak for themselves, it is hard to see how this will be possible without a prior chronological ordering of the designs.¹⁹ There are cases where this is possible at least in a relative way as I hinted previously. (Berliner, 1964, *passim*) and as this article will indicate with more examples. Of course one must as a precondition accept as valid the hypothesis that disintegration of form postdates the same form in its intact state. Therefore, the disintegration, though not dating a piece absolutely, does date it later than the original form. If a weaver uses disintegrated forms beside purer ones, then he provides us with a *terminus a quo* by proving that the latter might still be used at a time when the demand for them was no longer a matter of course. (This conclusion



Figs. 6 and 7 Details of Textile Museum 71.72

Wessel does not seem to accept in the *Supplement* to the Zurich catalogue, no. 656.) Furthermore, if a disintegrated form has been transmuted to a new pattern of definite *Gestalt*, then it is clear that its design presupposes the disintegration at an earlier date. Such recognition of evolutionary phases belongs among the legitimate methodical tools. Their correct evaluation, however, is complicated by rather obscure problems: how much distortion can be assumed a consequence of the difference between contemporaneous good and poor weavers and between the possible different standards of craft and folk art? In addition, did creative artistic forces from time to time give some new direction to the evolution?

Some of the Museum's new acquisitions may contribute towards achieving answers to these basic questions. We see in Figs. 8, 9 and 10 three phases of the hunting horseman motif which must have developed from the possibilities inherent in the design. Of course, Fig. 8 shows already a distant descendant²⁰ of a naturalistic design comparable to TM Va (Berliner, 1963, p. 47). The horse is in profile turned toward the right; the body of the rider is frontal, the torso and arms forming a triangle from which protrude the very short neck and the geometric straight leg. Thus the horse is divided in about equal symmetrical halves, with the head slightly turned to the front, so elongated as to reach the leg, counterweighting the enormous hind-quarter with the long straight tail. The diminutive legs are evidently galloping. The rider sits, or stands, without a saddle or stirrups, as in a hollow.

His right arm is raised. The motif beside it is not recognizable; it could have been an animal or the end of a floating part of clothing. The left arm is extended, and above it is a bird. Under the horse is a small animal. In Fig. 9 we see how easily such a type lent itself to further denaturalization. It is instructive to observe which details of the prototype were retained (conservatism is a fundamental trait of textile design, which usually evolves step by step), and which were changed radically. The torso has shrunk to a minimum, as opposed to the lengthened left arm with the raised hand, and the bar of a leg. Both head and foot are turned in profile opposite to the direction of the horse. Preserved are the head-gear, a motif under the foot, and the quartering of the animal's body by the straps of which characteristic ornaments have survived independently. The legs have won, the head has lost, in size and naturalism. It is now less a horse than a fantastic animal with a protrusion from the mouth of something other than a tongue. Despite the scant remnants of naturalism, this is still the representation of a rider in action. Whoever believes (as do some designers and this writer) that evolutionary possibilities are always inherent in a design, will be inclined to see the type of Fig. 9 as having reached a crossroads. Two developments were possible: further progress towards transforming naturalism into an ornamental pattern, or reversing the direction and returning to more naturalistic designs. Fig. 10, the Textile Museum roundel, seems to represent a phase which nearly exhausts the possibilities of development toward ornamental pattern

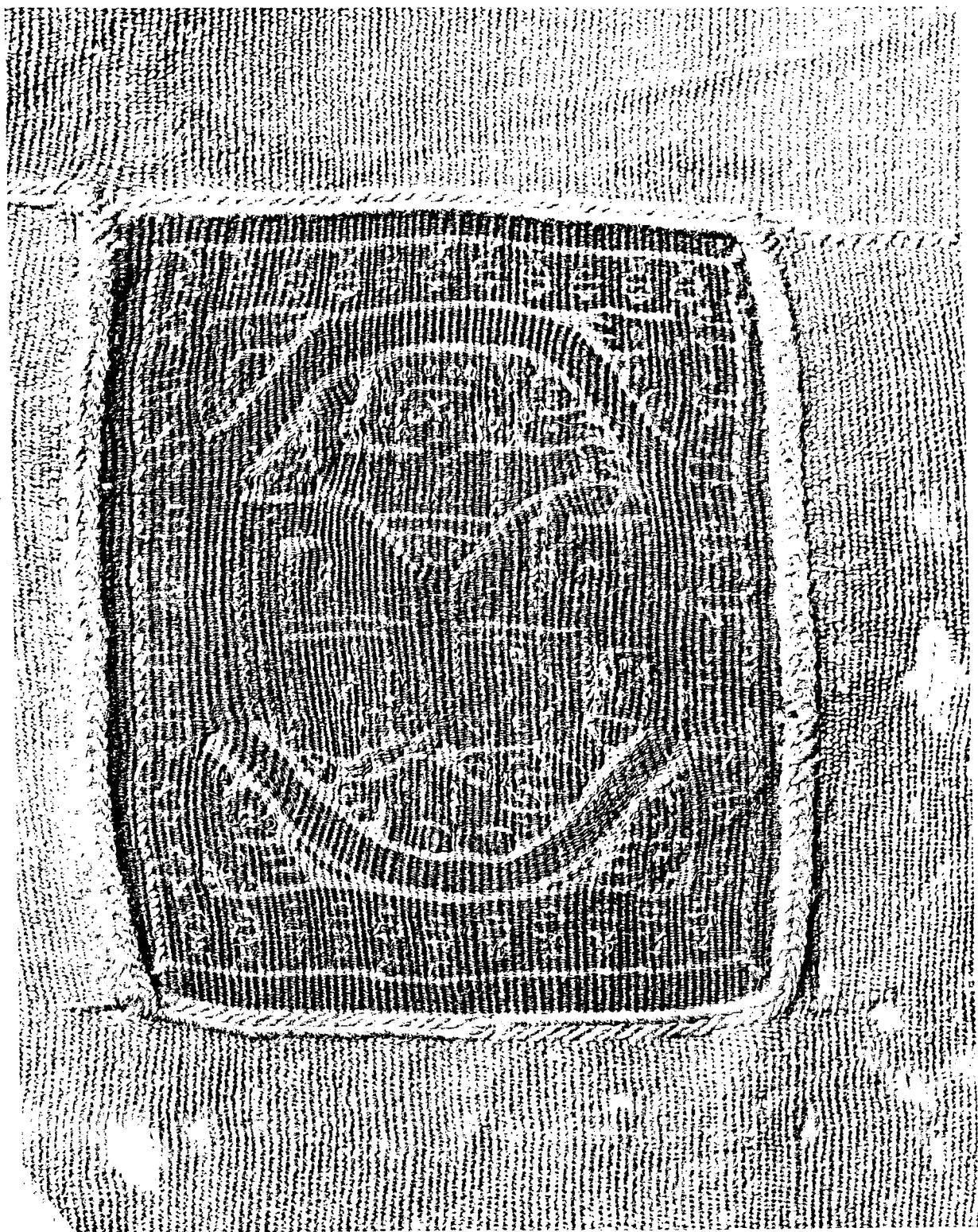


Fig. 8 *Textile Museum 1964.17.7 (10.8:9.4 cm)*

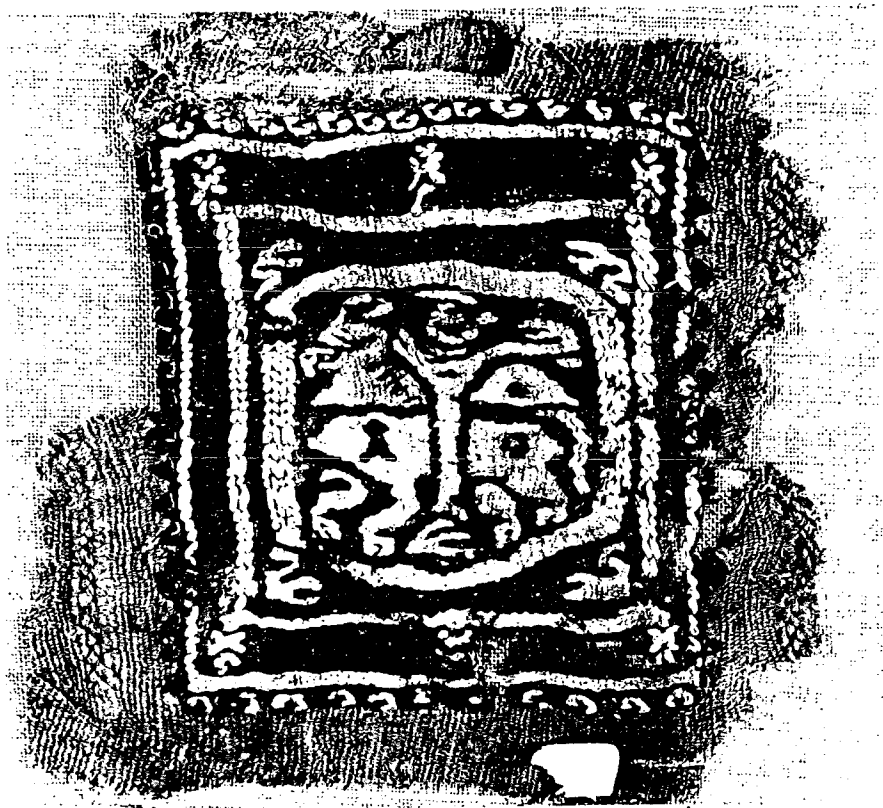


Fig. 9 *Textile Museum 1964.17.2 (11.7:10.5 cm)*



Fig. 10 *Textile Museum, 1964.17.4 (7.3:7.5 cm)*

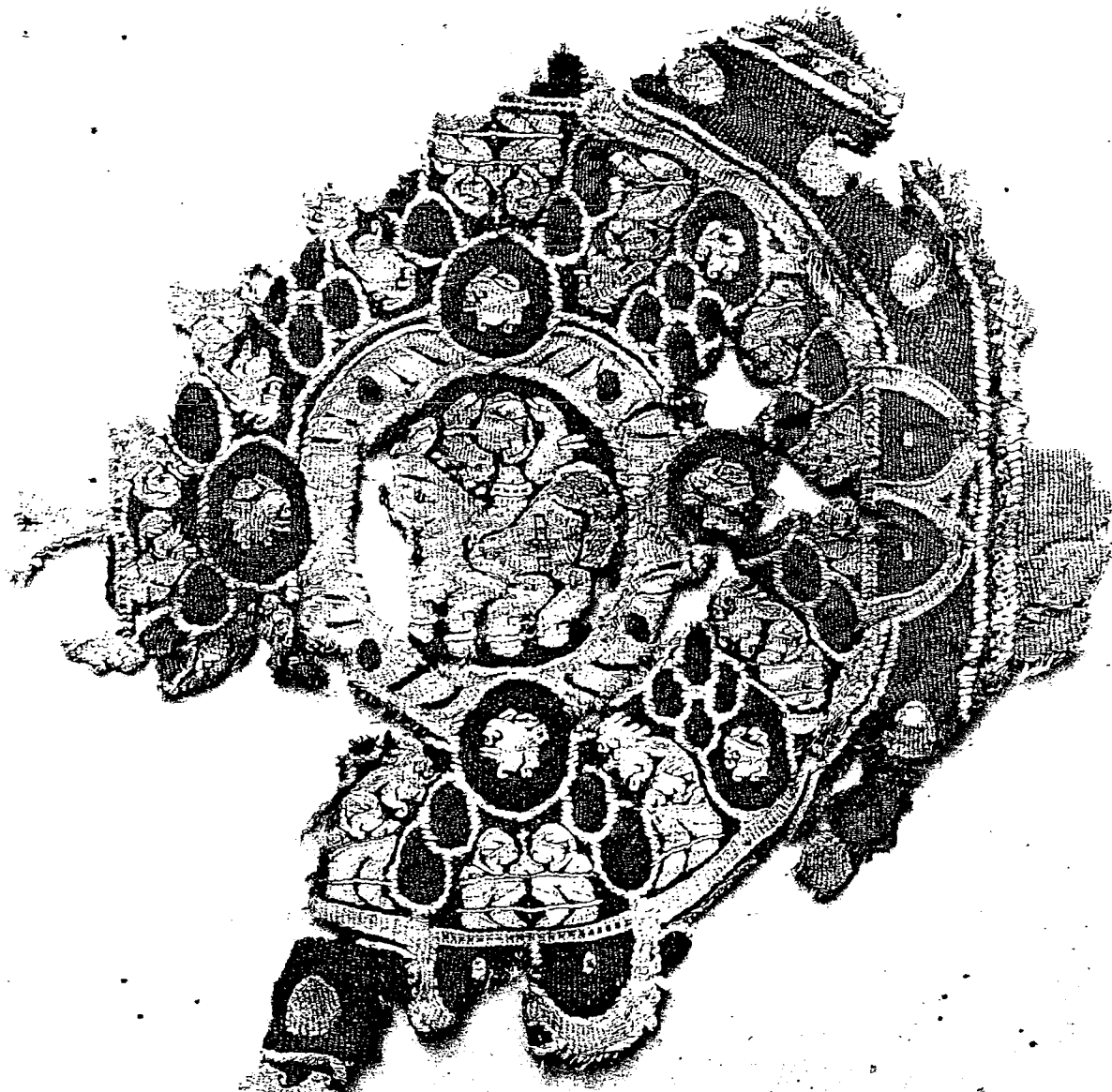


Fig. 11 *Textile Museum 721.20 (20.5:19.5 cm)*

in an art derived from the classical and which shied from abstraction of the type familiar in Peruvian or modern art. The man is reduced to a head, with characteristic emphasis upon the headdress, probably a diadem or crown but possibly a helmet. Only some dots designate the body, connecting the fore and hind parts of the animal, presumably remnants of the outline of its back. Since one would hardly suppose that this line was once part of the design of a man, it serves as a warning against hasty assumptions as to the origins of abstractions which may often be very obscure. It would be hard to guess that the design on the right is derived from a combination of the motifs of the raised left hand with that of the hind quarter. The intended significance of the motif at the bottom center can-

not be determined. But it can be surmised that the intention was to represent a mythical ruler upon a mythical animal. It is possible that it was meant to be Alexander the Great upon a combination of his famous horse and a griffin, the animals which helped him to ascend to heaven. One must not forget that Alexander had become a hero of folk myth and was an Islamic hero also for some periods.²¹

The thought of Alexander as the subject of the representation is suggested also by a group of Textile Museum tapestries which up to now has received no attention. The roundel in Fig. 11 (bought in 1948) has a most unusual design in which the strangest of the motifs are those fantastic beings with human legs though otherwise a genus apart. Other parts of the bodies are hardly recognizable,

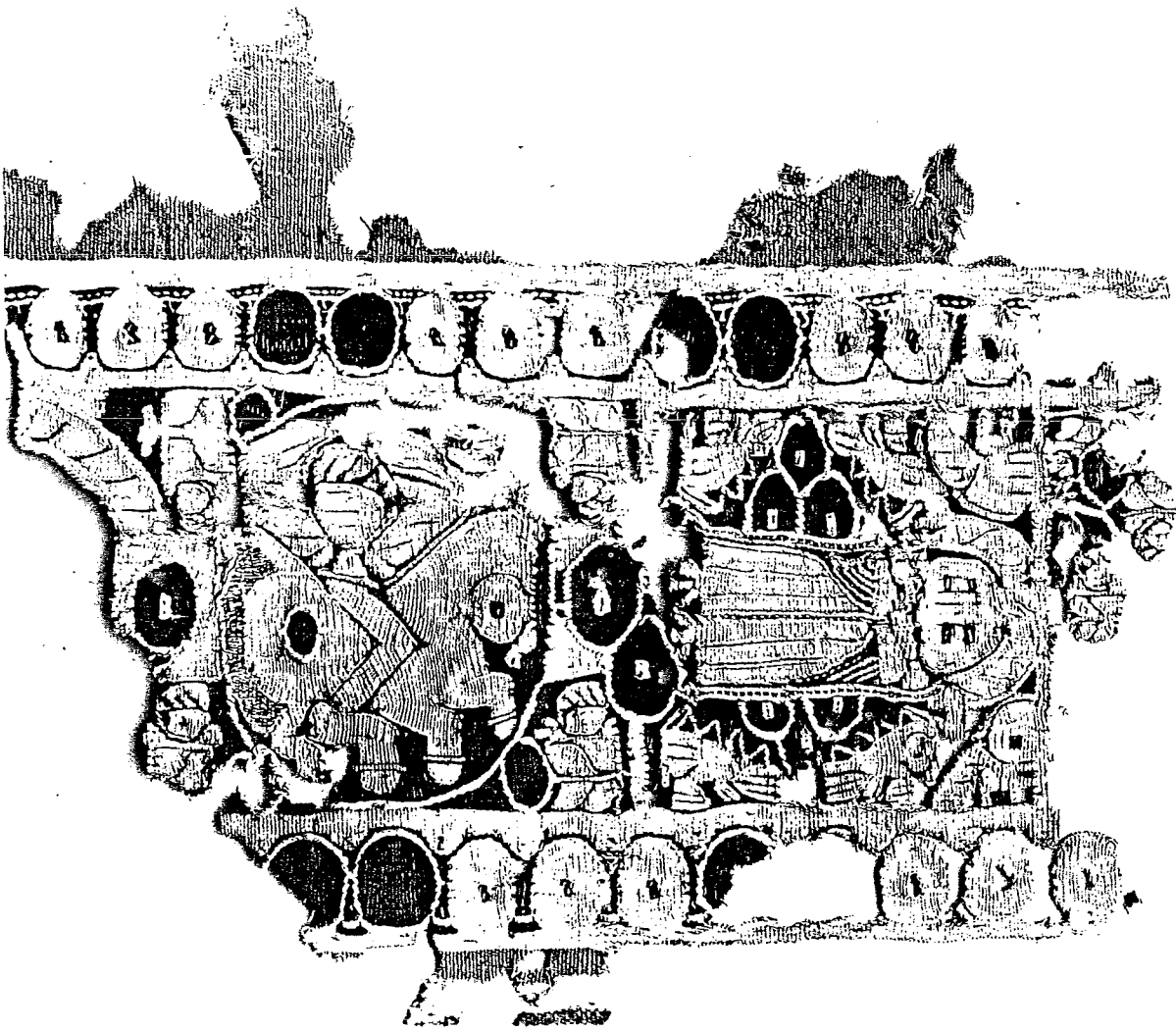


Fig. 12 *Textile Museum 721.18 (20.3:23 cm)*

but upon long necks sit heads of the strangest of shapes. Probably the weaver himself had no clear conception of those beings and believed them to have been conceived as consisting of small limbs of an animal. Certainly neither the long necks nor the features are human. The features derive from those of classical silenoi. Mongrels also are the isolated heads with snout-like mouths. It is evident that again (Berliner, 1964, p. 42) we see Wild Men, but this time not as in a theatrical performance but as actual captives. They stand fettered, the pair in the bottom center possibly in a crouching position (cf. the captive in Fig. 12, bottom center), or they may be standing armless figures. The faces are more dog-like than human, another species of Wild Men. Their representation, with that of the hero, reminds us that their lore was connected with Alexander's campaigns to India. Though apparently rather distinct as design, the horseman in the center poses some riddles not conclusively solvable at present. It

is evident that he sits as in a hollow and that the animal's tail rises from its back as in Fig. 8. Only a fragment of the strap is shown, in the wrong direction, united with a piece of dotted band to a cross shape. The legs are much less diminutive. It is open to question whether the head was that of a horse or of a fantastic animal. The long leg of the rider is bent at the knee, preserving the "hellenistic" motif (see Berliner, 1963, p. 50). The torso has the shape of a small barrel, encircled in the middle by a dotted band (cf. the band in Fig. 8). Both arms are raised, though it is impossible to interpret every detail of their design. The right sleeve ends with a band (bands are also distinct above the hoofs of the animal), which seem to merge with something protruding from the mouth (cf. Fig. 9). A thread-like line connects the helmet with the outline of the neck, a motif recurring in the pairs of fettered captives which will presently be discussed. The connection between such motifs and corresponding styliza-

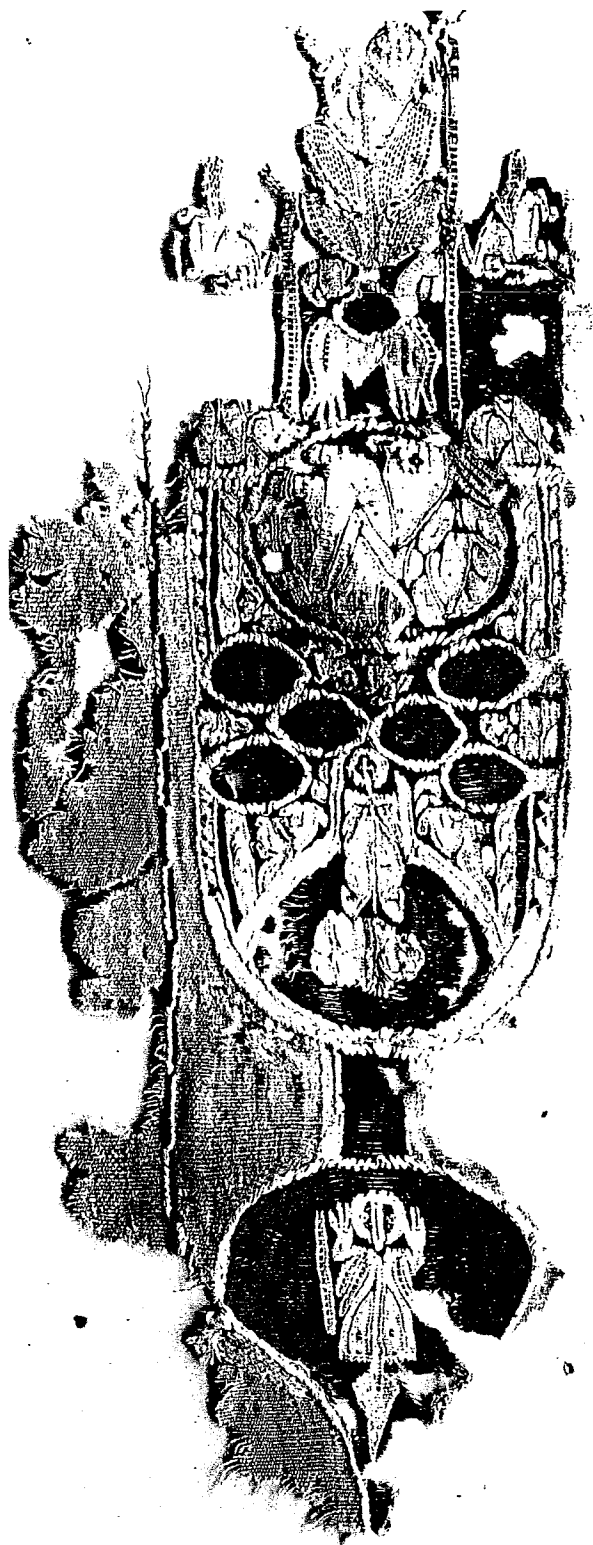


Fig. 13 Textile Museum 721.19 (34.8:12.5 cm)

tions in Figs. 8, 9 and 10 becomes clearer through a comparison of the rider in Fig. 11 with some corresponding ones in the related pieces. Fig. 13 shows a fragment of a clavus (TM 721.19) which may or may not have belonged to the same garment with the roundel to which it is closely related. The design of the animal is surprisingly close to that of Fig. 9. The legs are not too small. The tail grows from below the base of the triangular hindquarter, and some ornamental motif is shown in either part of the quarter. The oversized ears are there and the strange design of the mouth of the horse.²² The breast strap seems prolonged into the mouth giving the impression of reins lying upon the neck, which might lead to the conclusion that the head is intended as a horse's head. It is peculiar to this group, however, to emphasize outlines in this manner making it sometimes doubtful whether the threads serve this purpose or whether they have some specific meaning. It is evident that some kind of helmet covers the head of the rider above the eyes and over the ears. But one cannot be certain whether it has a strap or whether the line around the neck is merely to emphasize the outlines. The arms are raised, the lower part of the left one being omitted.

Rather clear are the designs of the riders in the centers of TM 721.18 (Fig. 12) and TM 71.109 (Fig. 14). The riders sit again as in a hollow, and the animal heads are fantastic. The disk in Fig. 12, as the corresponding circle in Fig. 14, can only be the animal's nostril. The tail in Fig. 12 grows from a slit, similar to, but not exactly like Fig. 13, and in Fig. 14 it grows from the end of the hindquarter. In Fig. 12 both of the rider's arms are raised and covered by bulky sleeves. Indications of the hands may be lost in the hole damaging the textile. In Fig. 14 only the oversized right arm is raised, the enormous left hand lying upon the mane. The motif above the mane is enigmatic but might be an animal's head. The small torsos of both riders are similar to Fig. 11. The oversized heads are shown *de face*, both covered by elaborate helmets with a chinstrap in Fig. 12, and earguard in Fig. 14. The abstract design of the features in Fig. 12 will be discussed later.

The rider's design is very clear in a roundel of the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (No. 38. Dt.18) Fig. 15. He sits upon a horse whose tail grows quite naturalistically. It is significant that a vertical motif appears on the hindquarter as in Fig. 11, and that the rider's left foot is clearly indicated, which is not the case in the other examples. The head is very distinctly drawn, with the helmet shaped like an enormous tiara with earguards. Strange it is that we find no hint as to why the arms are so enormous and formless. There lies a riddle as in Fig. 11. It could be that the Zurich roundel²³ suggests an explanation. The tapestry belongs iconographically and technically to our group though it is of another type. It gives the impression of a lightly sketched drawing, the details of which are worked into what seems to be an imitation of cro-



Fig. 14 Textile Museum 71.109 (roundel, 25.5:23.5 cm)

cheted or other needle work. The design is difficult, often impossible, to recognize. One must rely on guess-work and must beware of the trap of "seeing" what one is looking for. The rider appears to sit upon a galloping horse whose head is sharply turned toward the onlooker and lowered so much that it covers the whole neck and ends beside the rider's knee. The horse's ears and eyes seem clearly indicated, along with the headstall and bit. If this is so, then the hook could be explained as indicating the reins. As in Fig. 8, the tail starts growing on top of the back. The legs are diminutive. Under the horse probably lies a fallen Centaur, or another

horse. The motif of the horse seems to be best compared with that in the Textile Museum's Alexander roundel (Berliner, 1963, p. 40 and 1962, pp. 3-22).²⁴ If one imagines these as crouching instead of in motion and with lowered and correspondingly turned heads, the weaver's intentions are probably recognizable. He seems to be depicting a sudden stop in the horse's forward thrust. The rider's head is turned toward the right shoulder, presenting a startlingly individualized profile. It is possible, however, that the horse is intended to be falling, and the rider therewith fleeing. It may well be that the Alexander roundel, to-

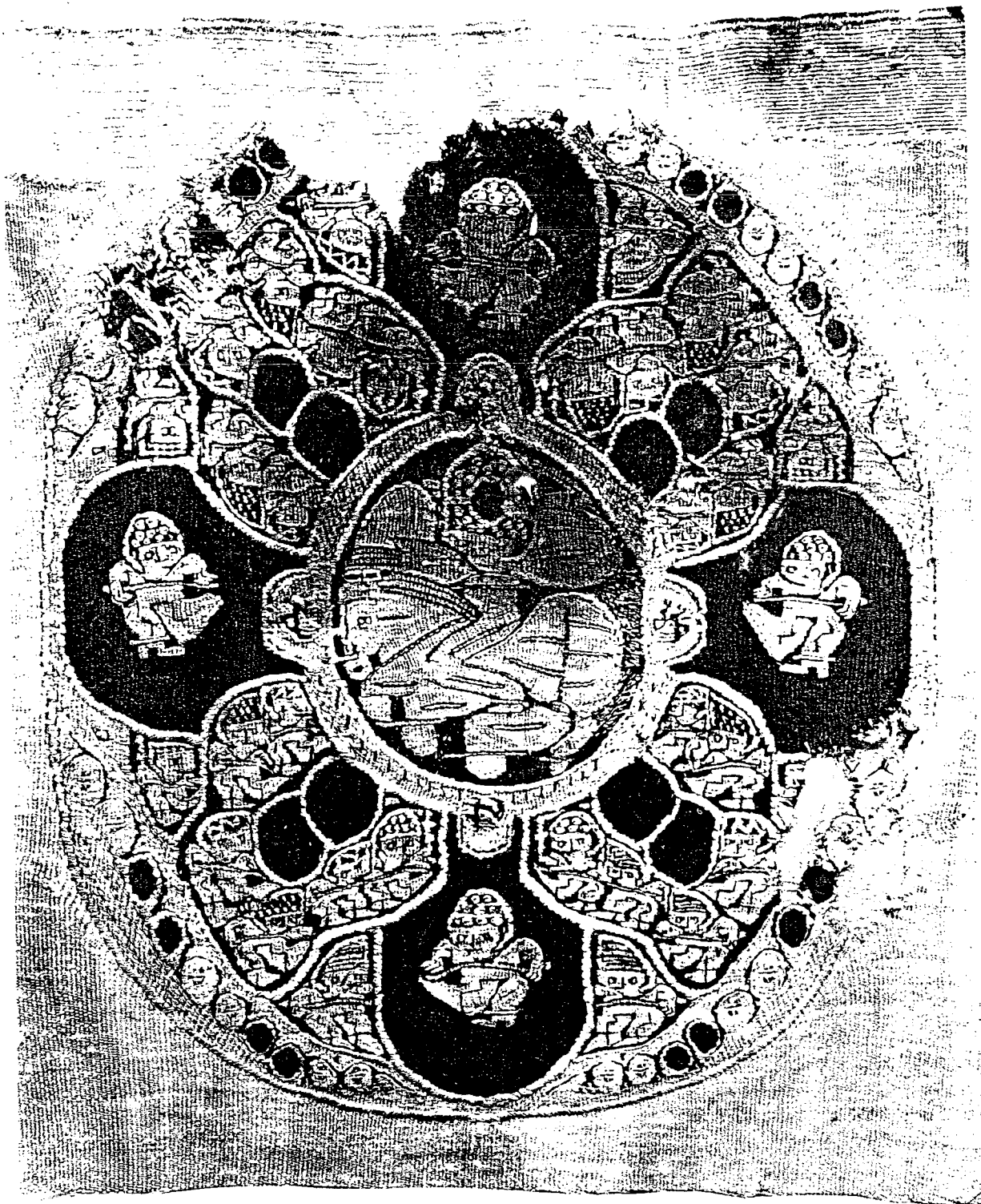


Fig. 15 *The Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, No. 38.Dt.18 (24.1:21.6 cm)*

gether with the ivory in the Walters Art Gallery (Berliner, 1964, p. 44) can help us to understand the motifs of the arms. The right hand may hold a big sword. A shield may be suspended before the

left elbow, with some fingers of the left hand visible. Returning to Fig. 15, it is possible that one sees at right of the rider's head what has become of a shield and the left hand. But it is not possible to

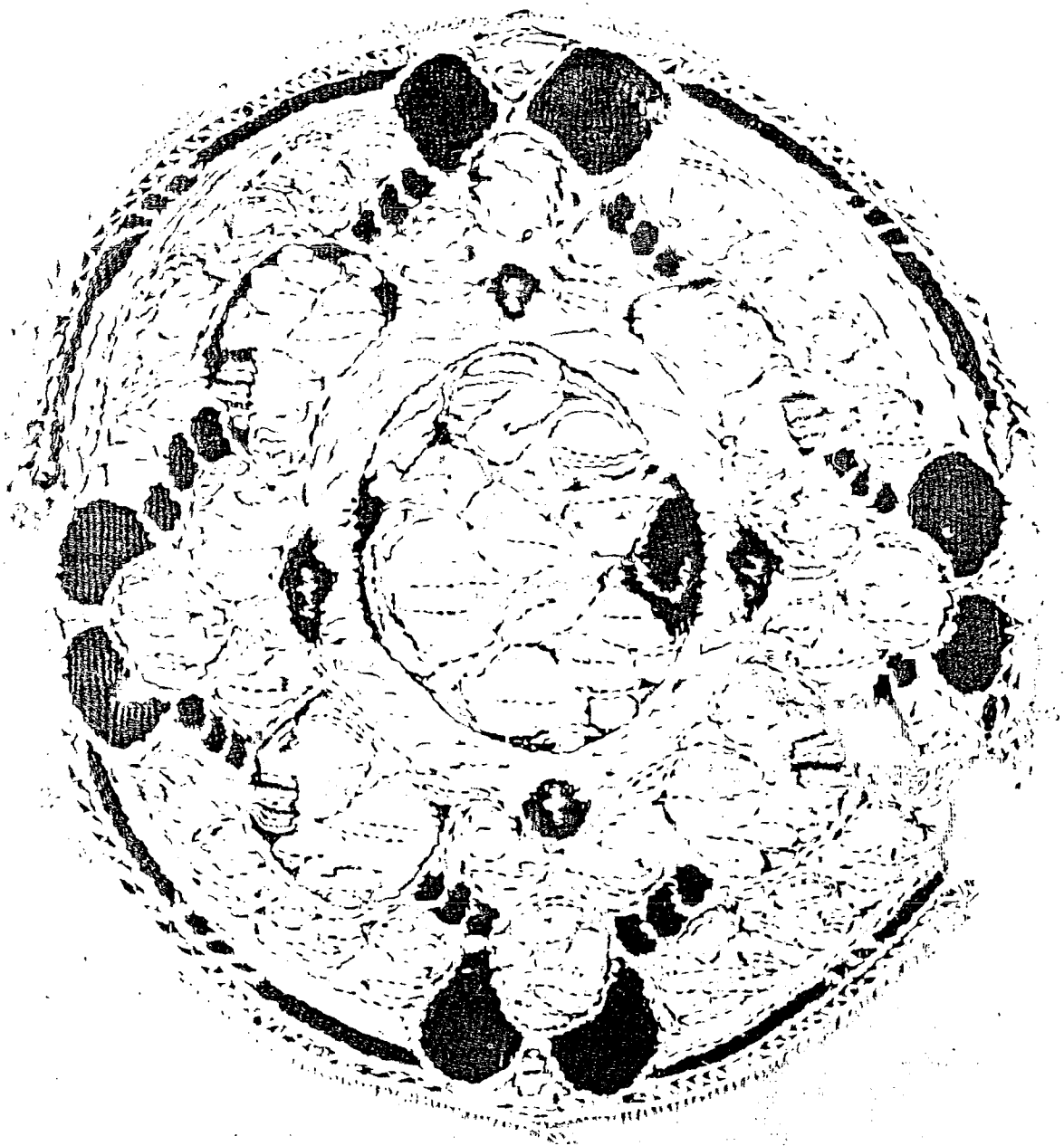


Fig. 16 *Kunstgewerbemuseum Zurich*

suppose the right arm holding a sword. The upper part of the object may originally have been some animal, or the whole something else than an arm.

We cannot be certain that the hero represented in the group is Alexander. It is probable in Fig. 11 because of the vanquished Wild Men. The decorative schemes of Fig. 11 and Fig. 16 are quite similar. They share what outside of this group is undocumented, lack of a strong differentiation between the inner field and a frame, the latter reduced sometimes to an insignificant border. As in Fig. 11, the central medallion of Fig. 16 is framed by a kind of wreath. But the intersecting medallions

with heads are replaced by small ones with unidentifiable motifs. Above these are circles with what appear to be heads shown in profile. Those at left and on top show again surprisingly individual types. The right one is indistinct. The one at the bottom is probably an animal's head shown upside down. The circles are supported by pairs of radial strips of very indistinct design. One is inclined to assume that corresponding parts of symmetrical decoration contain the same motifs, but that is by no means sure in all pieces. The narrow radial strips with the standing Wild Men in Fig. 11 are replaced by broad ones in Fig. 16. Those at the bottom in

Fig. 16 contain Centaurs, those at the top almost certainly contain kneeling and probably fettered men with disproportionately enormous heads. They are shown upside down. It is striking how much more distinct these motifs are at the left side of the tapestry than at the right. It can almost be concluded that the weaver worked from a drawing which showed only half the roundel, leaving it to his skill to do the mirror image himself for the other half. The helmet of the hero seems to be of the same type as in Figs. 11 through 14. In Fig. 14 this type of helmet is in evident contrast to the differently decorated ones of most of the warriors and especially as compared with the elaborated helmets of the riders under and above the central medallion. It seems an intentional representation of some king, with a kind of exotic Persian "crown," thus supporting the identification of the hero in the center as Alexander. At the same time, it seems improbable that the wearer of the tiara in Fig. 15 is Alexander, and it is well to bear in mind that he alone of the riders in these tapestries seems to be riding an animal which is beyond doubt a horse. It is easy to imagine roundels of different designs decorating one cloth. It could then easily be that the subject matter of one might represent the Persian enemies of Alexander. The fragment in Fig. 14 seems to come from a hanging. At least, no example of a garment seems to be known where motifs connected with the theme of the roundels are shown outside of them as is the case with these figures of dancing women.

Whether or not the representations are of Alexander's campaigns, certainly they refer to battles and victories. This emphasis also sets the group apart from the mass of textiles found in Egypt. I mentioned Wild Men, some seemingly with dog-like faces, as captives in Fig. 11. They wear helmets similar to the hero's. Certainly the three captives in Fig. 12 and those in Fig. 13 have helmets like the hero's, as does the fourth man in Fig. 12 (top left, shown upside down). Otherwise the latter seems a different motif from the others. It is easy to see an animal before the crouching man which could be meant as an offering. But did the weaver intend it so, or do his lines and shapes have another meaning? The helmets of the warriors in Fig. 14 are decorated with dots, similar to the crown of the king. A few have a decoration of stripes. The helmet of the hero is strikingly different, and it would seem that the two riders shown upside down in the same row are meant to be his enemies. Their outside hands carry swords, the inside ones stretched beyond the heads of their mounts. This leaves unexplained the motifs between the helmets and the shoulders, but the weaver may not have been interested in drawing clearly and naturalistically. Perhaps he simply depicted the outside hands raised, following a usual scheme, not delineating how the swords were held. If one compares the king's (bottom center) enormous right leg with the ridiculously small head of the mount and recognizes that he is thrusting a spear with both hands, then it is

clear the extent of leeway left to the weaver's interpretation. Each of the seven panels of various shapes and sizes which are repeated four times in radial arrangement, contains one warrior. Certainly those in the largest panels are mounted, as they are in the panels flanking the crowns. The five others seem to be meant as footsoldiers thrusting spears. Some of these warriors have faces which look so much like those of animals that it is possible that they were intended as half beast. However, the degree of possible stylization can be gathered from the two isolated female dancers. These are reminiscent of the representation of dancers in the "victorious ruler" roundel discussed in a previous article (Berliner, 1963, p. 49), and shed light upon the inclusion of diminutive lions in the decoration of Fig. 14. Disguised as an ornament motif, they still bear testimony of the valor of the hero. Disposition of the lions upon brackets, as in the roundel, is impossible before the 17th century, if these brackets are conceived as parts of an upright scaffolding. However, what appear to be brackets are in reality segments of the borders of round compartments, as is evident in those below and above the central medallion. As soon as this is recognized, the door is opened to an understanding of how the frame of the medallion came to the four indentions which again make a strangely 17th century impression. A predilection for the combination of variegated compartments is a style characteristic of the group. It is especially pronounced in Fig. 14 in those shaped like angular scallops. The strong temptation we feel to see them arranged in superimposed layers may indeed be the designer's intention. Wessel published in his book a tapestry (*Koptische Kunst*, 1963, Pl. XXII) the decoration of which must also have been meant to suggest three layers. He classified it as from a 5th century Greek workshop, an average piece for the non-discriminating customers "Massenware" (*ibid.*, p. 236). I doubt the correctness of the classification. The whole design in Fig. 14 is conceived as shown against a background, as if cut out, fastened to it, or embroidered upon it. The artistic effect is achieved in two ways, in the strong contrast between the decoration and the void, and in the juxtaposition of compartments of surprisingly different shapes. Eccentricity is intentional, as is evident where the hands of the riders reach into the compartments beside the central medallion.

That we are dealing with a strong, conscious stylization becomes especially evident in Fig. 15 and in the two standing men in Figs. 12 and 13. The last vestiges of classical form have vanished, if one does not reckon as such the tubelike shapes replacing the geometric folds and details, as found in different forms in the Textile Museum roundels 72.173 and 72.168 (see Berliner, 1963, Figs. 2 and 3). A new stylization having developed, it may be difficult for us to interpret-correctly what we see. Apparently all the small figures in Fig. 15 wear helmets and hold spears or staffs. None seems to represent a captive. Each of the two pairs nearest



Fig. 17 *Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, No. 15.741 (heads enlarged)*

the vertical axis of the medallion as well as the isolated figures below and above the big lateral compartments carry in one hand an object which can hardly be anything but a candlestick.²⁵ These would clearly characterize the event as a ceremonial reception of the hero with a staff or arms dance. Even before reaching this conclusion, one may have interpreted the somewhat taller figures in the four large compartments as dancing girls. Though their warrior attire is bewildering, it would not be out of place in the context of a war dance. The girls are probably intended to be standing upon one leg, the other angularly bent and covered by the skirt. The supporting legs are in trousers, with emphasis upon the separation of shoe and trousers. The elaborated heels on the shoes are baffling as we are wont to think of early shoes as without heels, but they are clearly indicated on the high shoes of the otherwise nude female dancer in a weaving exhibited by the Olsen Foundation in 1955.²⁶ This was dated circa 3rd century but is certainly later. Heels are also found on the shoes of the dancing girls in the emperor roundel of the Cooper Union Museum (Berliner, 1963, Fig. 18). Perhaps they gave support as do modern ballet shoes.

One more kind of detail demands attention. The four little animals in the scallops of the medallion (Fig. 15) are what has evolved from the lion motif discussed with reference to Fig. 14. No one would hesitate to define their stylization as reminiscent of something Fatimid.

Details in Figs. 12 and 13 make it still clearer that the group belongs in a transitional phase between a post-antique and an Islamic style. Especially evident in these strips is a fluctuation between a semi-naturalistic style and a fully abstract one. Even after recognizing that the rider in Fig. 12 has a monstrous head and diminutive body between oversized legs, one may be reluctant to admit that the features are indicated by three horizontal strokes, similar to those indicating folds in the sleeves. One must concentrate on the man standing in an aedicula to realize fully that the faces were not really intended to be fully delineated but only to convey an impression of facial features. During this stylistic phase, the weavers evidently felt that the eyes were most important, the nose and mouth least. If

one had the masses of material at hand for study, it should be possible to show the evolution step by step. Once again I can only point out the problem without offering a solution. The question of when, and under what influence, this disorganization of the face began cannot be answered at present. Certainly the two male nudes (Zurich Catalogue, No. 11201, p. 25) which flank a cross and an indistinct motif, cannot be earlier than 6th century, as dated there. All the features of the faces are replaced by a single small circle. Equally uncertain is the date of a fragment with three men in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (Fig. 17). The standing man in Fig. 13 shows another way of abbreviating facial features, with eyes, and probably nostrils, indicated, the nose itself grown beyond any possible human form. Our understanding of this type is made easier by the tapestry in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Beckwith, p. 25; Grube, pl. XVII, No. 13; and Berliner, 1962, p. 13). The strong contrast between the naturalistic eyes and the linear, non-projecting nose, is so striking as to prove conscious stylization. It is uncertain whether the mouth was meant to be indicated. Such a phase is much more probable in an ascending evolution than in a disintegrating, and still less in a decaying evolution. The details appear unhesitatingly self-assured, as they are when search for a new form has been successful. It was not a problem of naturalism versus unnaturalism, or a competition with reality, even if the weaver intended to represent a definite person. The problem was one of orderly decorative organization of details remaining after dissolution of a naturalistic design. Space is not available to demonstrate the evolution which led to the naturalistically absurd position of the left foot of the man in this Victoria and Albert piece. It can only be stated that it is not a product of chance or arbitrariness but is derived from antecedents. It would have been easy to design the upper part of the body of required width and to locate the head in the middle of it. All that was needed was the urge to do so. Wessel missed an opportunity to shed some light on this evolution when he limited himself to the simple statement that the woman (not dancing) with the castenets in Munich (Wessel, 1961, p. 289) "seems to sit" but may be meant to be danc-

ing. De Francovich correctly puts her into the same evolution with the man in London (Victoria and Albert), and with a figure which probably represents the seated Virgin Mary in an Annunciation tapestry in Berlin (Wulff-Volbach, no. 6958). De Francovich referred to the "coerentissima omogeneità stilistica, di un alto livello stilistica." But unfortunately he designated as a male figure in the Berlin tapestry what can only be a woman (De Francovich, *Rivista* . . ., pp. 147 ff.) It is evident that the man in Fig. 12 belongs, broadly, in the same evolution, although certainly to another strand. It becomes evident that they derive from the same model if one observes the traces of the division of the garment in the middle, preserved in both, and the similar position of the hands near the hips. But the differences are marked. In Fig. 12, the arms are crossed, and no neck is indicated, and the three-dimensional folds, while they were still recognizable in the London figure, are here completely stylized. In Fig. 13 the figure with the staff started from another motif. One might be tempted to see in him an example of the end phase of the development. The three examples, however, are, despite relationships, not close enough to each other to allow a conclusion, or even a hypothesis, as to which represents an earlier or a later phase. The decoration of the strips is not entirely unnaturalistic. The captives in Fig. 12 have already been mentioned. Despite strong stylization, one can recognize five birds in the strips beside the aedicula. Most of the anatomical detail is indicated by outlines or by slit-like strokes. The sixth animal, bottom right in the angle, having no beak, may represent a seated dog, the upper part of his head reminiscent of a horse's, with a mouth. One cannot tell what the two birds beside him are meant to be doing. The three others are evidently busily seeking food. The animals are not mere decoration but still are an integral part of some naturalistic setting. That the captives-hero motif descends from an originally coherent composition is obvious. Whether the man in the aedicula and the birds were parts of it too cannot be decided at present. One cannot rule out as possibly related motifs the man with the staff and the group above him (Fig. 13). It can hardly be doubted that it consists of a fettered captive in the act of *Proskynesis* under a standing man. His clothes are similar to those of the other man. His feet are indicated in a manner recurring in Fig. 15. The arms are not shown. The design of the head, though similar basically, is more simplified. No identification for the two can be proposed, but they hint at a remote model representing an elaborated victory ceremony, and the horse at left of the central medallion may also have had a place in it. The stylization here is peculiar; its outline is near enough to nature to be immediately recognized as a horse, but it apparently has more than two pairs of legs. A multiplication of legs is not an isolated phenomenon in tapestries found in Egypt, but it seems to have raised no interest to date. Its investigation must be deferred to a later discussion. In Fig. 13, the prob-

lem is complicated by what appears to be decorative bands at the front and back of the horse. They may originally have been straps which have become displaced. A horse which is partially outlined by similar dotted bands can be seen on the Beatus manuscript (fol. 134, Gerona [Spain] Cathedral), finished in A.D. 925. Wilhelm Neuss, having the most intimate knowledge of the Beatus illustrations, emphasizes the mixture of Early Christian-Byzantine and Visigothic traditions with rich oriental forms (Neuss, p. 271, Fig. 107). According to him, the horse points directly to Persian and Sassanian art. (I cannot cite any Sassanian example for the bands.) The horse in the tapestry in Fig. 13 gives the impression of being an intruder from a definitely foreign world—the northern world. Hilde Zaloscer spoke of a possible Scythian influence in Egypt in the 6th century (Zaloscer, p. 162). One cannot deny the possibility; however, the hypothesis is a very daring one in the light of available evidence. The fluctuation between naturalism and decorative stylization is very marked at the left end of the fragment. Above the horse is a surprisingly naturalistic rendering of a plant, whereas it is very difficult to decide whether the two small animals are meant to be birds or horses. One of them shows clearly the hook-like excrescence from the mouth. There is the same uncertainty about the type of animals on either side of the man above the kneeling figure. The two small figures are certainly quadrupeds, probably lions, the design making sense, by chance or intention, whether seen horizontally or vertically.

Among the strangest details in Figs. 11 to 15 are, in the central medallions, the rings surrounding the waists of the riders, emphasizing plasticity. Though one might be immediately inclined to see in them descendents of belts, their high position makes one wonder. In fact, the motif probably developed from the circular band which surrounded the lower part of the chest connecting the ends of the short clavi (Berliner, 1963, p. 42, Fig. 4). It became fashionable, probably not before the latter part of the 7th century (and seems for a short period to have been considered a very prominent part of tunic decoration, as shown here in Fig. 8). Somehow it became for a time an indispensable detail in the indication of a torso, as in the group under investigation, or in another new acquisition of the Textile Museum (64.17.9., Fig. 18) which is technically and stylistically related closely to Figs. 9 and 10. Two seated men are shown in what appears to be a lively conversation. There cannot be any doubt that the left arm of the man at left is making some decisive gesture, though we cannot recognize what the hand is holding. The object stands out yellow against the predominantly white design, as does the headdress of the men. Of the second man only the head is depicted, it being left to the imagination to visualize the body indicated by the strokes. The designer did not care to detail more than the heads, and that only with the minimum number of strokes needed for expressiveness and the third dimension. The

weaver succeeded in both respects to a surprising degree. Mainly because of the eyes, the heads are formidably expressive and immediate, to a degree which classical and post-classical antiquity knew only for caricatures or theatrical masks. The weaver's contemporaries, who we can assume could take more meaning than we from beholding the representation, may have understood it as showing masked actors in some theatrical scene. As in Fig. 9, the elongated left arm is contrasted with a stump-like right arm which, together with a corresponding stroke, serves as the neck. As in Fig. 9, the head is without a connection with the body, which is a hexagon shape in which a diagonal probably is an intermediary motif between the bands in Fig. 8 and the rings around the waists. That the diagonal stops short of the opposite side attests to the competence of the designer or weaver. The same device is used to prevent what evidently indicates the seat from becoming a mere decorative pattern. All this and the masterful balance of the distribution of mass in the available space are far from amateurish. One can be inclined to comparison with the equilibrium of the colored masses which, in the judgment of Father du Bourguet, is an especial mark of excellence in the late Coptic tapestries. This little tapestry in Fig. 18 (diameter, 6:5.8 cm) is especially suitable to impress on us the problems we have to face. If one transposes the basic features of the representation into a relief sculpture, he will easily get the conception of a late Hellenistic terracotta. But of course, we know of no contemporary examples of comparable style, simultaneously impressionistic and expressionistic in abstraction, either in sculpture or in the pictorial arts. One may find some in popular scribbles, but they will lack the self-assured determination of stylization. Unfortunately, of the whole type of tapestries which is here represented by Figs. 9, 10 and 18, general attention has been directed only to two pieces. One of them, from Krefeld, was in the Vienna Coptic exhibition in 1964, dated in the catalogue 4th to 5th century (*Frühchristliche und koptische Kunst*, Vienna, 1964, No. 565, Fig. 113). It represents, in my opinion, an earlier phase of the style from which Fig. 18 is derived. It is described as showing a dog, a faun and two playing children. Certainly the faun is dancing, as is his opposite figure, a girl. The relationship between these two figures is emphasized. They are admirably connected by the dog, with the result that, if the composition is taken as flat, as is intended, the boy has become an integral part of the composition within the circle, and certainly he too is meant to be dancing. This manner of filling a circle is a flattened out version of that in the Iphigenia sacrifice where our discussion started. Somehow the two belong in the same evolutionary strain but are only remotely related. Though derived from some Hellenistic composition, the execution of the Krefeld piece is much nearer to Fig. 18 than to Fig. 1. To feel this one need only observe how readily and effectively naturalness is sacrificed to decorativeness of line and



Fig. 18 Textile Museum 1964.17.9 (6:5.8 cm)

plane, or how the faun's body or arms are reduced to flourishes. A roundel in the Zurich Museum (*op. cit.*, No. 11212, dated 7th-8th century) shows dancing and swimming bodies in absolutely dissected states. Though also belonging to a type which started from a Hellenistic composition, like the Krefeld piece and Fig. 18, it can in no way be considered as belonging to a Hellenistic development. Once again it must be stated that the hooks are not there upon which to hang their classification. The same is true for all the tapestries of Figs. 9, 10, 18 and 11; 14, 15 and 12; and 13 (I am grouping them as they belong together). Fig. 16 shows a representative of a similar stylistic phase, but the designer had undergone some fresh Byzantine influence of which the other works seem to be free. When discussing Fig. 16, I pointed out the evident effort to imitate the effect of some needlework. The same tendency is clearly recognizable in the whole group, Figs. 10 to 15. Of course, what appears in these as contrast between designed motifs and the void is in the tapestries a contrast of design and background. This emphasis upon the amount of contrasting undecorated spaces (there is no *horror vacui*) and their outlines gives the impression of somehow being influenced by Egyptian "plaited work" as shown in Fig. 19 (TM 72.180). But this so-called "Egyptian lace" (Siewertsz van Reesema, p. 13) is another field not yet investigated by historians, as is true of the whole problem of the influence of embroidery upon the tapestries. It cannot but have been strong during the early phase, as embroidered ornaments on vestments were earlier than tapestry (woven) ornaments. Technical evidence for such influence is offered by the use of a free bobbin as though it were a needle not belong-

ing to the loom. Though the story is not yet told, it is evident that not all periods sought the same effects by using this technique. Sometimes its freedom from the rigidity that is characteristic of the mechanical weaving process is used to enliven the design, whereas, for example in Figs. 9, 10 and 18, the goal is the effect of contrast between the different stitches. When and where the whole representation began to look like an embroidery is not known, nor whether there was later any connection with "laid" embroidery. The Brooklyn Museum owns a piece with a bust of a woman in a square frame (No. 38.674), the entire design being created by overlaying a free moving thread. This could be a rather early piece. Donadoni dated his tapestry (Donadoni, pl. 32, no. 20), which simulates an embroidery executed in simple vertical stitches, 6th to 7th century. This is the tapestry with a representation from the fables of Aesop. There is no data concerning its workmanship. The Textile Museum owns a tapestry as yet unpublished (white on purple, 73.7) depicting a horseman and two pairs of genii with hares, simulating an embroidery with "scratched in" design. It is certainly not early and might have been imported. The example at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston (No. 96.205) depicting a man with a shield and worked in the same technique is more like a later Coptic piece. I have earlier mentioned (Berliner, 1962, p. 18) that the Textile Museum's Alexander roundel shows surprising similarity to relief embroidery. Ernst Kühnel has noted (Kühnel, 1927, p. 48) simulation of embroidered stitches in some later Islamic tapestry. It remains for me to direct attention to the use in Fig. 13 of simulated pierced surfaces, not only as in Fig. 12, as details of the design, but also to enliven it through contrast with a smooth surface. This device is clearly recognizable in the plant above the horse. It cannot be proved, but this too may be influenced by needlework. However, much too little is known about antique needlework of any kind to make any definite statement. But we know that this same contrast became a favorite effect for the designers of plaster decorations during the 9th century in the whole Arabian (Abbasid) empire. I am emphasizing the contrast, whereas other scholars were especially interested in the problem posed by surfaces roughened by "net-work, cross-hatching, slitting or pitting" (Creswell, p. 237 and passim). Herzfeld saw them as evolving from the treatment of leaves in Sassanian Persia (Herzfeld, 1923, p. 119). More important than the question of origin in our present context is that the effect of contrast was one the Arabs enjoyed. On several occasions we have mentioned one or another phenomenon in the tapestries which might be called Islamic, although none of the Museum pieces here discussed can be classified as Islamic. We are facing the task of recognizing intermediary phases between the non-Islamic and Islamic styles.

I search in vain for help in du Bourguet's survey of Coptic tapestry weaving in the introduction of the catalogue for the Paris exhibition (1964), or in

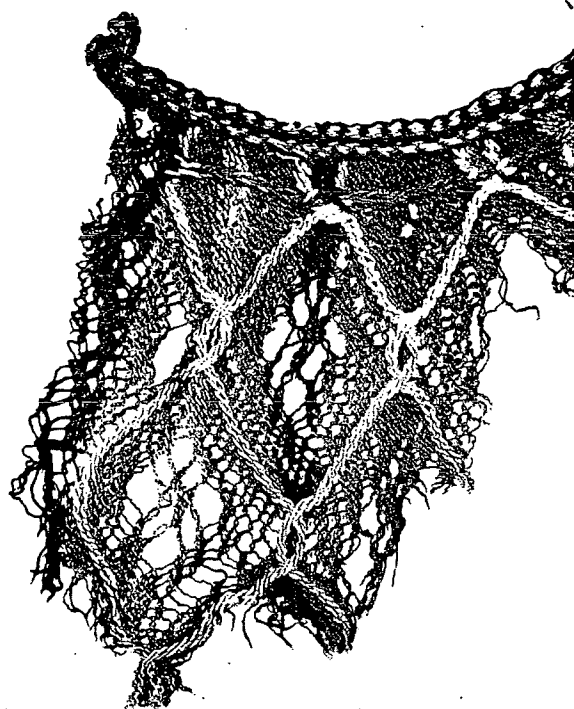


Fig. 19 Textile Museum 72.180 (19:22 cm)

his 1963 discussion of basic traits of Coptic art during the first five centuries of Arab rule. It was of course commendable considering the audience to repeat in Essen that it would be an error to assume a cataclysmic end to Coptic art in the 7th or 8th century and still better to emphasize that before the conquest Coptic art was a distant province to Byzantine art, a statement repeated on page 25 of the Paris catalogue. But deeply convinced as I am that textile design has a development of its own, I find du Bourguet's treatment too unspecific, not detailed enough and too apodictic.²⁷ Nor did he raise the questions which for our context are the most important: How was it possible for designers assumed to be Coptic to work in an Islamic manner at a time when the Islamic style was only in the process of developing? What may have happened when the new rulers suddenly had easy access to Egyptian goods? Herzfeld answered the first question for Coptic art in general, that many Egyptians, converted to Islam, "intermarried with the Arab immigrants and, originally lords . . ., sank to lower social classes and learned from the conquered," a process which he sees terminated during the 9th century. "At the same time the most important characteristics of Islamic art are developed," (Herzfeld, 1910, p. 63).

H. I. Bell's tentative answer seems still better to me: "May we not see in this yet one more instance of the burgeoning and blossoming of aesthetic productivity which the engrafting of an alien element has so often excited in the ever fertile stock of Egyptian culture?" (Bell, p. 347) My answer to the

second question, not raised before, is that one can assume the reactions usual in such situations. Some Arabs, who after all had their women with them, would have more or less avidly accepted the more glamorous fashion in Egypt whereas another part no less eagerly would have repudiated it. There would have been many solutions of compromise before the new "official style" was born of which Kühnel wrote.²⁸ Of the Egyptian producers of textiles, some would have tried to please the taste of the Arabs and to conform to their taboos, whereas others evidently were not eager to do so. Though not mentioned by either Wessel or du Bourguet, the Jews were of enduring importance in the production and distribution of textile goods. We have almost positive documentary proof²⁹ that Jewish weavers like Joseph and Zacharias at first worked the same stylistically for Arabs as for their other customers. Few may be left who doubt that there were Coptic weavers who continued to work in their own style far into the centuries of Arab rule. On the other hand, we do not know how long it may have been before Arabian men began to weave, but certainly female weavers were available sooner. It is only natural, and probable, that some tried to imitate the Egyptian craftsmen, and it is anybody's guess how many of the distorted and poorly designed weavings were produced by them at first. But among such Arabian textile workers and the mixed Egyptian-Arabian population would have developed what could be termed an early Islamic style. We can assume with certainty that it developed slowly with many intermediary phases and variations. To assume an early cleavage between Islamic and non-Islamic weavers would be as erroneous as to have assumed such a break between the stylistic evolutions of the Egyptian pre-Islamic and the Islamic periods. Only Grube (*op. cit.*, pp. 82 ff.) emphasized the importance of the transitional phase and regretted the sparse attention paid to it. Most important in our present context is his discussion of the Turban of Samuel ibn Musa (Cairo, Museum of Islamic Art) with an extensive Arab inscription and the date 707 (possibly 804). Grube attributes the tapestry band to "a factory already well-established and accustomed to adding . . . inscriptions in the Arabic tongue . . . [on productions] for general consumption . . . as Samuel was undoubtedly . . . a Christian or a Jew." We cannot fathom the full significance of the fact, because we do not know whether the factory was in Christian, Jewish or Islamic hands. In any case, it is important to know that an Arab inscription does not necessarily signify that the piece was intended for an Islamic customer.

I refrain from proposing any precise date for the pieces under discussion. All that can be said is that the pieces shown in Figs. 8 to 15, 17, and 18 are in all probability later than 650 and that the piece in Fig. 16 may or may not be earlier than this. It appears certain to me that the conquest, with its far-reaching political, social and cultural consequences, influenced textile design in many ways

rather than one striking way. We must reckon with an independent Coptic development, remaining free from any Islamic influence; with Coptic designs of more or less "esthétique musulmane" (du Bourguet, 1963, p. 227); with designs of at first an emerging, and then a definite, Islamic character. It is to be hoped that the variety of hitherto unpublished and inadequately illustrated types will convince scholars in the field that it is vain to attempt to classify them exactly until much more of the available material has been sufficiently published.

NOTES

¹ An outstanding example is Géza de Francovich, *Rivista* . . . 1964, pp. 83 ff. Only two annotations: It does not prove the careful preparation one expects of de Francovich that he considers as "greco imbastardito" the Coptic inscription of the Textile Museum's Alexander roundel and that he quotes as reference for the stirrups some obsolete and rather tentative literature. He was not able to give a single new reason for dating the roundel in the 5th century (*ibid.*, p. 160; *Arte Lombarda*, p. 5). I recommend reading *Medieval Technology and Social Change*, pp. 14 ff., 142 ff., by Lynn White, Jr.

² The important paper of Ernst J. Grube, 1962, read to the American Research Center in Egypt in 1961, seems to have been generally unnoticed still in 1964.

³ Constantelos, p. 380. It is exceptional if in non-legal literature the fate of laws is told: "The third Fatimid Caliph [which could be Ismael al-Mansur (945-951)] made Christians and Jews wear black clothes . . ." a law which was later either repudiated or not enforced after he began to favor them. Payne, 1959, p. 208 f.

⁴ Kubler, 1961, p. 15. I am using some of Kubler's terminology which offered me the only help I know to describe the relationship between a very mixed population and its artistic productions.

⁵ For the scope of knowledge of Greek and Coptic monks of about A.D. 400 and their internationalism, see Festugière, pp. 23 ff. Whoever wants to convince himself that Wessel presupposes much more rigidity in the attitudes of the Monophysites and the Copts as human beings, will now read with much gain the article of C. D. G. Müller.

⁶ How difficult and confusing conditions were is shown in some statements by Ernst Kornemann who emphasizes that initially the states of the Diadochs were considered to be not Greek but Macedonian and that the Roman rulers knew only Egyptian subjects to whom also belonged the members of all prior ruling classes. See Kornemann, pp. 644, 649.

⁷ All too few facts are known about the artistic life of Alexandria in the centuries of Roman and Byzantine rule and after the beginning of Arab rule. Alexandria was never inhabited by a homogeneous population, probably much less so than others of the Greek colonies farther inland. It included in reality two other distinct communities, the Egyptian and the Jewish. Whatever may have been the fluctuations in the legal and social conditions of their inhabitants during the centuries, it seems *a priori* likely that the city became something of a melting pot for the work of artists and craftsmen. Cf. Harris, p. 89. Johannes Kollwitz endeavored in 1963 during the symposium in Essen to prove that the usual attributions to Alexandria of ivory sculptures are based upon pre-scientific suppositions. He seems also to have doubted an especially long survival in Alexandria of classical art tendencies though the influence of the great literature remained exceptionally strong. He considers (correctly) Byzantium as the leading artistic capital. See Kollwitz, pp. 207 ff. At present the latest survey of the research is Maurizio Bonicatti's, see pp. 121 ff.

⁸ Cf. John Shapley, pp. 375 ff, esp. p. 381. This problem has acquired a new urgency since I. A. Izmailova wrote about unusually naturalistic ornamentation of an Armenian manuscript of the 12th century and pointed at its derivation from plant rendering in paintings of the old Egyptian New Empire. She postulates transmission via Greek-Alexandrian manuscripts because Coptic manuscripts do not show such dynastic influence (Izmailova, pp. 150 ff.).

⁹ Grube hinted at the problem in a general way. (Grube, *op. cit.*, p. 89).

¹⁰ One should never forget that like all textiles, tapestries were products of the economy also if produced in homes and that the production of, or trade with, textiles never stops. It seems that in our circle little notice is yet taken of the great activity of oriental historians in the field of economic history.

¹¹ To find a clear definition in the maze of imprecise statements about "Coptic *Volkskunst*" is very difficult and unrewarding for one who believes that the confusing terminology is caused by a wrong conception of Egyptian art in our era. In 1961 the "Formenverfall" (formal disintegration) seemed to Wessel both to be possibly related to the quality of the weaves (quality is qualified by quotation marks) and to be an inherent law of Coptic *Volkskunst* because, according to his theory, its "Traeger" (unclear term: producers? customers?) never had the opportunity to assimilate ("innerlich aneignen") classical antiquity, having had very little access to it. As is usual, Wessel does not take notice of the fact that "the greater part of the merchants, of the foreign traders [Fernhändler] and of the industry magnates remained in their homeland after the Arab conquest," Haussig, p. 178.

¹² For this paper I could use, of his new publications, only his lecture in the Essen symposium of 1963 (du Bourguet, 1963, pp. 221 ff.), and the catalogue of the Paris exhibition, 1964.

¹³ Numbers 157, 161 and 178 are not dated, probably because of some negligence. There are other defects in the catalogue impairing its authority. For example, how was it possible to term "danseuse" the emphatically male dancer depicted in the tunic (Cat. no. 216)? What justifies dating it in the 12th century? How can one be certain that some detail, though reminiscent of the Fatimid, was not possibly before the Fatimids? The inscription of the Textile Museum's Alexander roundel is rendered in the catalogue with two mistakes. I emphasize these (cf. p. 1, note 1) because they prove lack of awareness of the importance of the palaeographical evidence. I would have omitted "9th century" from my date if I had been able to find "a's" with similar loops before this century. I have not yet found any "M" with them.

¹⁴ He is repeated in a weaker execution in a roundel of the Victoria and Albert Museum which Kendrick (Vol. II, no. 375) dated 5th to 6th century. The prototype of another running man in the same Museum (Beckwith, p. 9, dated 7th century) could have belonged to the same Iphigenia series.

¹⁵ I saw only when preparing this article reference to the late Hellenistic Egyptian style influenced by performances in theaters and circuses around A.D. 600, (Ghirshman, p. 236). Remark by Clemence Duprat (?)

¹⁶ Ramsay Mac Mullen directed attention to an image used by the Emperor Constantius, "People in dramas recite their woes to the first comer," (Mac Mullen, p. 453).

¹⁷ It was by no means always axiomatic to consider textiles found in Egypt as Egyptian. In 1913 Oskar Wulff expressed his doubts clearly: "... only supposedly can one call the majority an indigenous production" etc. (Wulff, p. 390). Mikhael I. Rostovtsev wrote in 1914 of "so-called Coptic fabrics" in an article which has been translated in the *Archeologia classica* (Rostovtsev, p. 170).

¹⁸ "... robes in the Attic style [!! R.B.] and mantles." (Fitzgerald, p. 124).

¹⁹ Donald L. Wilber, whose proposal of a new term "littoral style" unfortunately has as yet remained unconsidered, believed also that some art-historical work has to lay the

basis upon which the analysis of techniques and materials involved can become historically meaningful (Wilber, p. 152). See also Donadoni, p. 112.

²⁰ A comparison with the horseman in No. 9025 in Wulff and Volbach's Berlin catalogue is helpful for the understanding of Fig. 8, though it is not exactly of the same type. The right arm is not shown, supposedly holding the reins. The animal under the horse is clearly a lion.

²¹ T. Gerasimov published, for example, a Seldjuk relief of about 1300 which represents him on horseback with raised arms. Upon the right hand is a falcon (Gerasimov, p. 337).

²² To what deformations a horse's head could be subjected is impressively shown by Wulff-Volbach No. 9025.

²³ Kunstgewerbemuseum Zurich, No. 1958-254, *Samm-lungs-Katalog*, 1963, Fig. 6, dated 4th century, p. 39.

²⁴ For its counterpiece see *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art*, December, 1959, Vol. 46, No. 10, p. 213.

²⁵ Candlesticks played a role in a ceremonial reception of a lord when solemnly entering his home. De Francovich listed the new literature about this *adventus domini*, *Rivista ...*, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

²⁶ *Coptic Art*, Olsen Foundation, 1955, Guilford, Conn., No. 65.

²⁷ One single example: On what grounds is the Paris weaving No. 208 dated 11th century while it was previously dated 7th and 8th century?

²⁸ Kühnel, 1938, p. 83. Nothing seems to be known about such important questions as for instance who was the decisive person in the state factories for the choice of the designs, the manager or a designer?

²⁹ Berliner, 1963, p. 53, n. 17. The fact is relevant, whether the workshops were in Egypt or in Syria.

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